

INTRODUCTION

The 8,800-acre Erie National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) consists of two divisions approximately ten miles apart in northwestern Pennsylvania in Crawford County.

1. **Sugar Lake Division**

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved Erie NWR on March 11, 1958. Establishment of the refuge occurred on May 22, 1959 when the first tract was purchased. Under the original and subsequent approvals, 107 tracts totaling 5,205.96 acres were acquired.

2. **Seneca Division**

The Seneca Division was approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission on June 6, 1967. Twenty-seven tracts totaling 3,571.46 acres have been acquired. Approximately 888.15 acres remain to be acquired.

The topography of northwestern Pennsylvania resulted from the retreat of the last continental ice age glacier. This hilly country in the upper reaches of the Allegheny River watershed is dotted with numerous lakes, swamps and marshes in association with meandering valley streams.

Historically, the area was an important nesting and resting area for waterfowl using the western portion of the Atlantic Flyway. During the 1800s, intensive logging and farming coupled with the near extinction of the beaver resulted in the loss of much valuable wetland habitat. The corresponding decline in waterfowl use eventually led to the creation of the Erie NWR.

Contrary to the popular belief, the refuge is not on the shores of Lake Erie. As the crow flies, the Seneca Division is 25 miles south and the Sugar Lake Division is 35 miles south of Lake Erie.

The name, Erie, comes from the Eriez Indians. This small tribe resided along the shores of what is now known as Lake Erie. In the mid-17th century, the Iroquois Indians defeated the Eriez and the tribe ceased to exist as a distinct group. In 1969, the refuge was officially named after this extinct Eriez Indian Tribe. Unfortunately, the name, Erie, is more closely associated with the area north of the refuge because of Lake Erie, the City of Erie and Erie County. This causes much confusion especially when the public is trying to locate the refuge for the first time.

HIGHLIGHTS

Climatic Highlights

Erie National Wildlife Refuge - 2002				
Month	Temperatures*		Precipitation**	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Rain</u>	<u>Snow</u>
January	59	11	1.78	9.30
February	60	4	1.37	10.0
March	69	7	1.65	8.02
April	84	19	5.78	
May	80	26	5.87	
June	89	42	3.58	
July	92	46	5.48	
August	90	45	1.81	
September	89	40	4.58	
October	79	25	1.99	
November	63	16	3.42	13.5
December	50	-2.4	3.44	19.5
		TOTALS	40.75	60.32

*Degrees Fahrenheit

**inches

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Monitoring and Studies

1a. Surveys and Censuses

1b. Studies and Investigations

2

HABITAT RESTORATION

2a. Wetland Restoration: On Refuge

Wetland Restoration: Off Refuge

A restoration of private lands project was completed on property of refuge neighbor Jon Reese.

2b. Upland Restoration: On Refuge

The Henslow field along McFadden Road was cleared by staff. Brush piles were left on the field with a plan to burn them in the future.

The property line was cleared along Bogardus/Reese boundary on Sugar Lake Division.

2c. Riverine Restoration

2d. Deepwater/Coral Reef Restoration

No activity to report.

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HABITAT MANAGEMENT

3a. Water Level Management

3b. Moist Soil Management

3c. Graze/Mow/Hay

All fields on the refuge were mowed this year by staff and volunteers.

3d. Farming

Cooperative farming was permitted on 391 acres by the following refuge neighbors:

Leigh Bowes – 33 acres

Jim Furry – 164.5 acres

Bill Lennox – 5 acres

Phil Parker – 50 acres

Jon Reese – 95 acres

Ed Simcheck – 30.5 acres

Charlie Woolstrum – 13 acres

3e. Forest Management

3f. Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burns were completed in April on NG-40, Hanks Road, Pool 9 field. Erie National Wildlife Refuge staff was assisted by the regional fire team under the direction of Mike Durfee.

Photos

3g. Pest Plant Control

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FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

4a. Bird Banding

2002 Bluebird Nesting Season Results	
Eggs Laid	33
Hatched	33
Banded	33
Fledged	24
Died before Banding	0
Died after Banding	9

Gary Sliter, Volunteer, managed the bluebird nest boxes on the refuge. He was assisted this year by Deidre Haas. The decision was made to discontinue banding bluebirds and the last bird banded on the refuge occurred on May 21, 2002. Sliter and Refuge Manager Haas made the decision after determining there was very little information gained from the banding in return for the hours dedicated to the program. Nest boxes will continue to be monitored and data recorded by Volunteer Sliter.

4b. Disease Monitoring and Treatment

4c. Reintroductions

4d. Provide Nest Structures

4e. Pest, Predator and Exotic Animal Control

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COORDINATION ACTIVITIES

5a. Interagency Activities

5b. Tribal Coordination

5c. Private Land Activities (excluding restoration)

5d. Oil and Gas Activities

5e. Cooperative/Friends Organizations

Cochranton Volunteer Fire Department received \$4948.00 in grant assistance under the federal Department of the Interior Rural Fire Assistance Program. The money will be used to purchase a variety of equipment needed to safely fight forest and brush fires. To qualify for the money, a fire department must have a cooperative relationship with a Department of Interior agency, serve a community of fewer than 10,000 residents, provide a minimum 10 percent cost share to the federal share, and serve a community with a “wildland-urban interface” – areas where housing development occurs near federal land that is vulnerable to wildfire. A ceiling of \$20,000.00 in assistance per fire department has been set. The assistance is part of a larger national fire plan to reduce wildfire risk.

The visitor center was used by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative for a Wildlife Habitat Workshop on July 30, 2002. It was attended by approximately 20 persons from the lumber and treecutting industry. The workshop included classroom work as well as field trips into the woods. Topics covered were: The Decision Tree Notebook; Habitat, Cutting and Landowner Objectives; Measuring Habitat Variables; How to Use the Decision Tree; Participants Use the Decision Tree; and Management Options Discussion.

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RESOURCE PROTECTION

6a. Law Enforcement

The Jeep Cherokee was refurbished to be used as a law enforcement vehicle. It was very official looking after receiving its stripes and lights

Photo

6b. Permits & Economic Use

Trapping

Sixteen trapping units were awarded by bid system on October 3 for a total of \$1,172.55 as follows:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>BID AMOUNT</u>
A	Tom Terrill	\$114.50
B	Andrew Hyde	\$40.05
C	Eric Schall	\$41.17
D	Jim Kull	\$77.60
E	Tom Wentworth	\$47.50
F	Duane Russ	\$40.01
G	David Fowler	\$25.50
H	Mark Kuhar	\$50.05
I	Not awarded	
J	Joan Terrill	\$113.75
K	Byron Russ	\$82.67
L	Jim Foulk	\$140.00
M	Tom Yusavage	\$82.00
N	Paul Foulk	\$132.50
O	Todd McIver	\$100.00
P	Kevin Wescoat	\$35.50
Q	Paul Crowl	\$49.75

The period of trapping begins October 20, 2002 and ends March 31, 2003. A total of \$1,090.55 in trapping fees was collected.

6c. Contaminant Investigations

6d. Contaminant Cleanup

6e. Water Rights Management

6f. Cultural Resources

6g. Land Acquisition Support

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PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RECREATION

7a. Provide Visitor Services

Scouting

Fishing

The first annual Kids Fishing Event was held on Saturday, June 22, 2002. Miranda Crotsley was the coordinator.

Hunting

Spring turkey harvest – 4

Fall turkey harvest - 2

Deer Archery Season harvest – 8 antlerless; 4 antlered

Deer Gun Season harvest – 40 antlerless; 11 antlered

Muzzleloader Season harvest – 2 antlerless

Trails

Maintenance was completed by the YCC on the following: Tsuga, Beaver Run, Deer Run, and Muddy Creek Holly Trails.

Photos

Wildlife Observation

Visitation

7b. Outreach

Environmental Education Specialist Miranda Crotsley exhibited a display about the refuge at the Townville Old Home Days July 19 and 20. Approximately 500 people viewed the display, which included information on the hiking, hunting and fishing opportunities available at the refuge, as well as a children's game and a display of some mounted specimens.

Crotsley and STEP Clerk Sarah Armstrong presented an hour-long program on July 24 to 25 guests (22 children, three adults) from a day camp offered by the Meadville Housing Authority and the AmeriCorps program. The children were led on a nature scavenger hunt on the Tsuga Nature Trail and participated in programs about biodiversity and animal signs.

Crotsley and Bio-Tech Lauren Lynch presented an hour-long program on July 30 for the French Creek Council Cub Scout Day Camp at nearby Colonel Crawford Park. Approximately 220 people (200 children, 20 adults) participated in the program, which covered bird migration and other topics in accordance with the camp theme, which was "South of the Border" (Mexico).

Crotsley exhibited a display about the refuge on August 3 at the annual meeting/picnic of the Northwestern Rural Electric Cooperative. Approximately 2000 people viewed the display, which included information on the hiking, hunting and fishing opportunities available at the refuge, as well as a children's game. Duck Stamps were also sold at the exhibit.

On August 5, Crotsley was a "Guest Reader" at the Cussewago Elementary Summer Reading Program. Eighteen children and four adults participated in the program, which included a reading of *The Salamander Room* and a salamander habitat activity.

Crotsley presented an hour-long outreach program on August 6 for the "Hoghearts School of Wizardry" day camp in Erie, Pennsylvania. The program focused on bird adaptations and owls in particular, which coincided with the camp's "Harry Potter" theme. Approximately 50 people were in attendance (40 children and 10 adults).

The annual Crawford County Fair was held August 17 through 24, 2002. The refuge has a permanent space in Home Show No. 2 building for a display. Thousands of people attend every year and many viewed opportunities for recreation and education on the refuge.

Manager Jeff Haas and LE Office Jeff Enlow traveled to Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania on September 25. Enlow gave presentation to 27 students on law enforcement career opportunities in the Service. The students were a good audience showing interest by asking many questions.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative held a Wildlife Habitat Workshop on the refuge in July. It consisted of sessions on Habitat, Cutting and Landowner Objectives; Measuring Habitat Variables; How to Use the Decision Tree; and Management Options Discussion.

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PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

8a. Comprehensive Management Planning

8b. General Administration

Funding 2002

Refuge Operations	1261	\$335,600
Fishing Event-Grants	1261	6,000
Annual Maintenance	1262	19,400
YCC Program	1262	20,000
Maintain Facilities	1262	61,500
Rehabilitate Office electric	1262	19,600
Replace 1991 Dodge truck	1262	30,000
Replace 1979 GS stake truck	1262	78,000
Replace 1979 Imp vehicle	1262	52,000
Fire	9263	<u>7,000</u>
Total:		\$629,100

Personnel

The following is a list of employees who were members of the staff of Erie NWR in 2002:

<u>Permanent Full Time</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>EOD Date</u>	<u>Departure Date</u>
Jeff Haas, Refuge Manager	GS-13	09/09/01	
Jeffrey Enlow, Maint/LE Officer	WG-8	01/13/02	
Norma Lynn Kline, Biologist	GS-11	11/03/02	
Joyce E. Sliter, Office Assistant	GS-6	02/12/89	
Robert E. Battin, Maint. Mechanic	WG-9	03/14/77	
Donald E. Stover, Eng Equip Operator	WG-8	03/21/93	

Temporary STEP Appointment

Sarah Armstrong, Clerk	GS-3	06/15/01
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Temporary Appointment

Lauren Lynch, Bio-Tech

Temporary Group Leader

Luke Randall GS-5

Temporary YCC Enrollees

Cody Braun
Chase Chaney
Miranda Hasbrouck
Zack Mihailoff
Danielle Stefaniszyn

Volunteers

Matthew Adams	James McCarl
Richard Allen	Barbara Parker
Scott Bolton	Tim Poux
George Enlow	Josh Randall
Kathryn Enlow	Janette Steets
Bernard (Tim) Foulk	Gary Sliter
Deidre Haas	Damien J. Stover
Erik Holmberg	Darren J. Stover
Ralph E. Hunter	Ryan W. Stover
James Kaputa	Ramona Walls
Mark Kernick	Darrel R. Whitney
Janet Marvin	Scott Wissinger

Equipment and Facilities

Headquarters/Visitor Contact Station

Central air-conditioning was installed in the headquarters building by Agway Energy Products at the cost of \$12,473. It improved the comfort of the workplace for the staff as well as safekeeping of the historical paper records at the refuge by reducing the amount of humidity in the building.

Butler Building

A concrete pad and safety posts were installed to hold the above ground heating fuel tank.

Photo

New Vehicles

In May, a new Ford F-350 truck was purchased through GSA at a cost of \$24,124.86. It will be used for general maintenance and plow truck.

Photo

A new Ford F-550 dump truck was received at the refuge on October 9, 2002. GSA purchase price \$36,288. It was outfitted in Erie PA with a plow and spreader to be used for snow removal and anti-skid material on refuge roads.

Photo

An ASV posi-track vehicle was purchased for \$78,782.00 through Defense Supply Center. It will be used for water control structure, wood duck nest box and dike maintenance on the refuge. It is a very versatile machine with the following attachments: 73" bucket loader; 3-point hitch; PTO external shaft; brushcutter; 14" Dymax Forest tree shears; 6-way dozer blade; and 48" trencher.

Photo

The refuge purchased a Kubota tractor this year for mowing.

Bridge Removal

Joseph S. Musiek, dba Musiek Brothers, was awarded the contract to remove two bridges from the Seneca Division.

1. A truss-style bridge at the Muddy Creek Holly Trail had collapsed into Muddy Creek on August 8, 2000 when a large oak tree fell over onto it. It was located within the Muddy Creek Natural Area Reserve approximately 7/10 of a mile upstream from the Muddy Creek bridge at Johnstown Road. The bridge had not been used for vehicles for decades and was forming a constriction in the creek, creating a potential safety hazard. It had been determined that the bridge was not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The removed sections were buried in an uplands area between 50 and 100 feet from the creek bank.

Photo

2. The second bridge was also located on Muddy Creek several miles upstream from the confluence of Muddy and French Creeks. The road to the bridge received some vehicular traffic, but had not yet fallen into the creek. The wreckage was trucked out of the area.

Photo

Signs

A vehicle accident occurred at the intersection of Route 27 and Oil Creek Road in June. A refuge entrance sign was damaged in the event. The owner's insurance company made restitution for the damage in the amount of \$1,000.

Photo

A new style refuge entrance sign was installed by Robert Battin, Maintenance Worker, at the headquarters drive and Route 198.

Photo

Impoundments

The dikes and water control structures at Pool K and Pool H were rehabilitated this year with funds provided through a partnership grant between Ducks Unlimited and the National Wildlife Refuge System. The focus of the project was to provide higher quality habitat for a wide variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and fish. The project also contributed toward Pool K becoming one of the top fishing spots for the public and disabled individuals to enjoy in Crawford County. Work was completed by Robert Battin, Maintenance Worker, and Don Stover, PAFO Engineering Equipment Operator.

Photos

The dike at Pool 4 was cleared and resloped.

Weather Station

New components for the automated weather station were installed by Forest Technology Systems. It is located at the maintenance shop on McFadden Road. It is used for gathering weather statistics for prescribed burning and biological surveys.

Photo

FEEDBACK